

The teachings of the Iroquois Research Conference

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THE EASTERN DOOR

This year's 72nd Annual Iroquois Conference last weekend at Oswego, New York, was held at the Best Western Plus, and it included many First Nations participants looking at historical, sociological and up-to-date realities from our communities clearly. It seemed to mark a new wave for the coming years.

Fully managed by wonderful volunteers, the event offered the perfect ambiance. The quality service of the hotel's conference room was perfectly suited to the event and the audio and visual quality was also impressive.

What was previously often mentioned by Onkwehón:we members was the Iroquois Conference used to be mainly managed by Bachelor's of European origins, which seemed to segregate the participants.

But for the last 10 years, more and more participants from our communities are taking part in it: not just bachelor's degrees, but students, cultural developers involved in teachings, and elders.

This new wave was also expressed positively by participants and attendants in a circle managed by the organiser, Francis Scardera, after the first evening of presentations.

Last Saturday morning I was the first presenter, breaking the ice by discussing the creation of reserves in Lower Canada from the 1840-1850 period, when the Crown managed several jurisdictions, which eventually led to the Act to Authorize the Setting apart of Lands for the use of Indian Tribes in Lower Canada. That was put in motion on August 30, 1851, which authorized the commissary of Crown Lands to put aside extended lands of Lower Canada for Indians, including Tioweró:ton - Doncaster.

Afterwards, an internship experience from Akwesasne's Cultural Restoration Program (ACR) regarding medicinal and traditional flora plants, and a survey of the Indian Meadows as part of the 1796 Treaty, and implications on Superfund re-planting efforts was discussed by Sateiokwen Bucktooth and Shonoris Allen Smoke, both traditional medicine and healing apprentices in their fourth and final year.

The ACR promoted the several steps of the curriculum, which were presented as: Presentation of the body system and the medicinal qualities of plants, plant identification, medicine harvesting and the protocols of the chiefs and Clan Mothers and the faithkeepers and a clanology.

This year was also enhanced by the presence of a great academic and author, Dr. Carl Benn, who has been part of Ryerson University since 2008 as both a faculty member and as chair of the Department of History, and previously on the board of the Iroquois Conference.

Carl Benn, who has been in

the museum field for 34 years, has published in various journals and his books include *Historic Fort York* (1993); *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (1998); *The War of 1812* (2002); *Mohawks on the Nile: Natives among the Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt, 1884-85* (2009); and *Native Memoirs from the War of 1812* (2014), as well as recently completing a book on an early-19th-century Mohawk leader, John Norton/Teyoninhokarawen.

His presentation concerned five known and surviving portraits of Mohawk chief John Norton/Teyoninhokarawen dating from the early 1800s, two of which have come to light in recent years.

Through a study of these and related images, he analyzed their meanings and their utility for understanding Haudenosaunee and broader First Nations material culture from the beginning of the 19th century.

Volunteer and researcher Dolores N. Elliott from the Iroquois Studies Association made a presentation on the common beliefs and thoughts occurring when people think of Iroquois beadwork, such as the various impressions of people towards certain pieces; they think of the pincushions in the shapes of hearts, boots and stars, among other forms.

She also introduced other types of Iroquois beadwork: some not stuffed. Instead they are sewn to a base of cardboard while other beaded picture frames are popular among Iroquois beadworkers and to their customers who collect them.

She also showed another cardboard based form, also invented in the 1860s; the box, on which the word "box" was often beaded on their lids. With various ornate beaded designs and animals, boxes are an interesting cultural artifact that still survive in the 21st century.

Jean-François Lozier, from the University of Ottawa made a presentation titled "The Missing and Murdered of 1669," exposing the period of the early spring of 1669, when a Seneca man went missing while on his way to Montreal after a winter's hunt and an entire Oneida band similarly failed to return from the Mascouche River where they spent the winter.

He said it soon became clear that the missing had been murdered even though the French and the Five Nations just ratified a peace treaty 18 months earlier. These incidents created a rift between peoples who after a half-century of intermittent war, briefly coexisted peacefully. French colonials accused the soldiers of murdering them before a court martial and they were executed.

Simultaneously, the governor general sent wampum belts to the Senecas and Oneidas to ritually "cover the dead," in keeping with the protocols of intercultural diplomacy and with Indigenous

customs of restorative justice.

"Intercultural violence was nothing new, having been a fact of war in the region since the early seventeenth century, but never before had the killing of Indigenous individuals by Frenchmen been reported or prosecuted as a murder by the colonial state. The case of the "missing and murdered" of 1669 consequently stand as a tragic first in the annals of Canadian history, and invite a modest Early Canadian contribution to one of the country's great challenges in the early twenty-first century," he presented.

Teaching in the district, Kevin White from SUNY Oswego University had a presentation titled, *Examining Haudenosaunee Creation Visually & Report on Fulbright Experiences/Research*, in which he had the opportunity to access the Indigenous Knowledge Centre's archives and materials on Haudenosaunee Creation, which included two previously unpublished versions gathered from the Six Nations community on the Grand River.

Through his collaboration with Rick Hill, Frank Miller, and Taylor Gibson and numerous others - he presented a visual matrix of the published accounts of creation in Six Nations at Six Nations Polytechnic shortly before he left.

It is from these analyses that he exposed new patterns that have emerged as a result of its potential meanings.

Michael Taylor, also from SUNY Oswego, made a presentation surrounding observations on *Visual Symbols of Sovereignty: Flags of the Hodinoshoni*, in which he exposed that a commentary grounded on the contention of the Whitestown, New York city seal, in which the depiction of a wrestling match between the town's founding father and a member of the Oneida Nation serves as an intersecting point to review the adoption and the adapting of "flags, banners, nation seals" as means of displaying identity, symbolic cultural resonance, and a frame for sovereignty of individual Hodinoshoni nations and communities.

The official seal of the Village of Whitesboro in central New York, depicting a wrestling match between the community's founding father and the local American Indian chief, has survived decades of debates. In a meeting with both communities it was decided to replace it in January 2016.

"What is in these visual representations of Nativeness engage forms of community and personal identity. Each of the member nations of the Hodinoshoni offer all different forms of culturally resonant symbols that are different from one nation to the next. As well, there as similarities which serve as points of connection to the process of a larger identity of being Hodinoshoni/Six Nations/Longhouse," he presented.

In a comparative form, He

discussed these modes of identity grounded in the flags of the nations.

Then for a mid-afternoon break, a Fort Ontario guided tour by Paul A. Lear, archaeologist and historic site manager, was conducted on the state historic site in which we observed the star-shaped fort dating to the early 1840s.

It was built on the ruins of three earlier fortifications dating to the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812, and was occupied by the US Army throughout World War II.

From 1944 to 1946 the fort served as the only refugee camp in the US for mostly Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust under an executive order from president Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1946 Fort Ontario was transferred to the State of New York and housed World War II veterans and their families until 1953. It opened as a state historic site in 1953.

Ann Hunter, an independent researcher who lives in Longmont, Colorado, spoke about the records of the Albany Indian Commissioners containing many references to captives, slaves, servants, and runaways.

She analysed these brief glimpses concerning the attitudes of the Six Nations, the Mohicans, New York colonists, and their neighbours towards captivity and servitude in the 18th century.

Jessica Dolan from McGill University was covering *The Restorative Ecology of Peace: Haudenosaunee Environmental Knowledge and Philosophies of Stewardship* her doctoral dissertation exploring Haudenosaunee environmental knowledge (HEK) as a distinct Indigenous knowledge system, Native science, and philosophy.

It was based on one year of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, as well as cumulative experiences from six years research, teaching, consulting, and volunteer work with a number of Haudenosaunee communities

across the Confederacy.

In the dissertation, she showed how Haudenosaunee relationships with land and place are ontologically and epistemologically distinct and socially and geographically constructed.

The acolyte of Francis Scardera, Terry C. Abrams (Tonawanda Reservation Historical Society) and his associate in research, Cynthia Kocik (Cornell University), made their presentation on the Historical Log Cabins of the Tonawanda Reservation Historical Society, in conjunction with Cornell University's TreeRing Lab, conducting research on historical log cabins from the Tonawanda Reservation.

Abrams elaborated on the cultural and historical significance of these structures, and Cynthia Kocik, a research aide at the Tree-Ring Lab, detailed the data found through dendrochronological analysis of cabins from several museums.

The event was concluded at noon last Sunday by Scardera, Abrams and the wonderful volunteers managed by Kathryn Lavelly Merriam and also by Ellis E. McDowell-Loudan the moderator.

Three volumes came out of the collaborating university researchers and was published by Cornell University, including volume 1, which is presently sold out. Volume 4 is presently in the making.

The next conference is planned for Ganondagan, New York, where the International Iroquois Beadwork Conference occurred this year.

Of note: all details concerning the non-lucrative organism of the Conference on Iroquois Research's website contains archives of conferences from 1945, including programs from 1965-2016.

Note that the full program schedule and full details about last weekend's event with all participants, including those omitted here due to space, is available here: <http://www.iroquoia.org>.

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